

TERRORISM'S TENKASI MOMENT

Subhash Gatade

Tenkasi, called as Kashi of the South—suppos-edly for its Kashi Vishvnath temple, part of Tirunelveli district (Tamil Nadu) witnessed a pipe bomb attack on RSS office on 24th January at 9 pm.

Interestingly nobody was injured in the attack as no one was in the office at that time. As can be expected it led to tension in the area with Sangh Parivar organisations coming out on streets demanding action against 'fundamentalist' groups for spreading their tentacles.

It may be noted that the city had witnessed another explosion at Tenkasi New Bus Stand just before this attack where one person suffered minor injuries.

Fearing reprisals the police tightened its security. Forensic experts and personnel of Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad (BDDS) rushed in and collected samples from the site. Initial investigation revealed that a low intensity explosive was used.

Senior police officials also rushed to the place and camped in Tenkasi to defuse the tense situation. Looking at the fact that Tenkasi had witnessed communal violence in which six persons were killed in August last year, they did not want to take any chances.

Commenting on the attack, there were editorials in TN papers about the growing nexus of "Islamic Terrorists" in the state and the need to put it down with firmness. The police was even exhorted to be extra vigilant against such enemies of people and was also asked to nab the real culprits

All that is passe now.

And as a commentator commented the 'cat is finally out of the bag'.

The special police team, led by Deputy Inspector General of Police, Tirunelveli Range, P Kannappan has arrested three persons in connection with the Tenkasi RSS office bomb blast case.

The investigations revealed that the blasts were planned to provoke a backlash between two groups of different and dominant communities in Tenkasi. Speaking to reporters at Tenkasi on Monday, Inspector General of Police, South Zone, Sanjeev Kumar said on January 24, there was a bomb blast at the RSS office and an auto, parked inside the new bus stand at Tenkasi was destroyed.

Following this, special teams were formed to nab the accused. Investigations revealed that S Ravi Pandian (42), a cable TV operator, S Kumar (28), an auto driver, both from Tenkasi, and V Narayana Sharma (26) of Sencottai had planted 14 pipe bombs in the office of Ravi Pandian.

...Moreover, the bomb blast inside the new bus stand was planned to divert the police investigation, said Sanjeev Kumar.

(3 arrested in Tenkasi bomb blast case, Tuesday February 5 2008 08:12 IST, Express News Service, Newindian Express).

It is for everyone to see that S Ravi Pandian (42), a cable TV operator, S Kumar (28), an auto driver, both from Tenkasi, and V Narayana Sharma (26) of Sencottai today represent the less reported phenomenon of Hindutva terrorism..For all practical purposes till 23rd January they remained activists

of Hindu Munnani –an affiliated organisation of RSS–engaged in what they seem to be a 'patriotic' work.

Today they are the new face of 'terrorism' unleashed by the Hindutva brigade.

But not only these three 'musketeers', one should add names of four more who were apprehended on 5 th February, identified as A Balamu-rugan(20), S Velmurugan (18), A Murugan (24), all hailing from Tenkasi and Maasaanam (20) of Shencottai. They have been arrested for assisting S Pandian in making bombs and detonating them at the RSS office and town's new bus stand. According to 'The Hindu' (6 Feb 2008) the police even recovered bombs and detonators from them.

Looking at the hierarchial nature of the Sangh Parivar outfits, these blasts would not have been triggered without the knowledge of its top brass in Tamilnadu.

Thanks to the painstaking efforts engaged in by Mr Kannappan, DIG Tirunelveli range, who did not fell prey to the usual stigmatisation and terrorisation of the religious minorities, and after thorough investigations into the incident (24 th January 2008) which involved bomb blasts at RSS office in Tenkasi and another one at the bus stand apprehended the culprits.

It is now learnt that the Sangh Parivar organisations which fared miserably during the last elections were keen that Tenkasi does a 'Coimbotore' and they are able to get few sympathy votes. It may be told that this is the 10th anniversary of the Coimbotore blasts which had seen deaths of innocents.

A report filed by M.H. Jawahirullah (www.twocircles.net) :

According to Sanjeev Kumar, IG, South Zone, the bomb blast inside the new bus stand was planned to divert the police investigation. DIG of Police Kannappan said the trio tested the capacity of the bombs at Papanasam before executing the plan. Since the bombs contained substances like ammonium nitrate, electric detonators, batteries and timer devices, the explosion was possible within 30 to 40 seconds, said Kannappan. The Investigation is still going on. The Police said 14 pipe bombs were assembled and the operations began from July last year.

There are reports that the Tirunelveli Police have indicated that the explosives used in Tenkasi are identical with those used in the Makkah Masjid blast at Hyderabad. It is incumbent that in the light of the revelations in the Tenkasi blasts , the CBI should reinvestigate the Makkah Masjid Blasts and other Blasts which took place in different parts of the country.

Lest anyone think that Tenkasi is an exception in the otherwise 'smooth' record of Hindutva brigade, one needs to know how a very similar attempt was made by their counterparts in Vidarbha, Maharashtra to provoke communal tension.

Of course instead of throwing pipe bombs at their own office, this time they delivered detonators in 'gift packets' to hapless traders belonging to Muslim community. The developments in Vardha, Maharashtra bear witness to this point.

October 15, 2007. Syed Yusuf Syed Mahmood, owner of 'New Diamond Sale' situated in Sarafa Line, Kale Chowk, Wardha would love to obliterate this date from his memory forever.

It was day after Eid and the time was 2-2.30 pm. As part of his usual routine he had gone out for lunch. And his friend Shaikh Hussain Shaikh Lukman was

sitting at the counter. A young boy brownish in colour, wearing a full sleeve check shirt, reached the shop and made enquiries about Yusuf. On learning that Yusuf was not there he handed over a box with a Videocon cover to the sales girl which had a gift sticker pasted on it "To Yusuf from Raj".

After his return to the shop at about 4 pm his friend handed over the 'gift' packet to him. One could say that it was sheer coincidence that he grew suspicious after opening the packet which contained a box of Videocon CD player inside and promptly called the police. A close examination of the packet revealed that it contained detonators. A Panchnama was duly conducted. Yusuf and his friends heaved a sigh of relief that a tragedy was averted because of their presence of mind.

Little they could realise that their happiness would be shortlived.

No sooner the Panchnama was over they got a message from Shaikh Hussain, who runs a similar gift shop at Warud, Amravati, that Warud Police Inspector Mr Rajesh came to visit his shop and asked him to wind it up.

The very next day a similar incident was repeated at a shop 'Sun Optical's' (Socialist Chowk) owned by Idris Khan and Jaggu Anand. At around 3.40 pm when Idris Khan was at police station regarding the previous day's incident he got a call from his shop reporting the presence of a similar gift box lying at his shop. The matter was immediately reported to the police. Police did not lose any time in rushing to the spot. A bomb disposal squad was called from Nagpur. Here also the 'gift' box had a similar sticker pasted on it 'From Raj'. Further examination revealed that the incident appeared to be a hoax as no incriminating material was found inside the box.

While it was clear from day one that all *the three businessmen from* minority community were law-abiding citizens, who had taken extra care to take the police into confidence, the local media saw to it that the whole incident was blown out of proportion. None from the media community deemed it even necessary to visit the actual spots but had no qualms in writing exaggerated and sensational versions of the whole affair. A newspaper went to the extent of declaring that 15 parcel bombs had been received at the shop of Idris Khan and police suspect the hand of SIMI.

On their part the Hindutva organisations went all out to pressurise the administration to deal firmly with the threat of 'Islamic Terrorism'.

As of now it transpires that the police have apprehended few Hindu youths belonging to a local fanatic Hindutva organisation in connection with the delivery of 'gift' packets laden with detonators. It is a different matter that neither there is any official word from the police over these arrests nor the media wants to convey to its readers the real story. The media, which had written juicy stories about the emergence of SIMI in the area and—'with its nerve centre in Akola' which had reportedly 'started functioning underground after gaining support of ISI of late' (*Times of India*, 17 th October, Nagpur) has preferred to keep quiet over these arrests.

It was noteworthy that civil liberty activists from Nagpur and Wardha decided to look into the matter and let facts speak for themselves. Apart from the 'delivery of parcel bomb incident' at Wardha the team also investigated house collapse at Vidhul (District Yavatmal) due to suspected bomb blast at the house of a hindu doctor and 'police engineered riot at Achalpur' (District Amravati). It concluded that '..[m]edia has played a particularly irresponsible role' by attempting to 'sensationalise the incidents and communalise the

situation' by reporting in a biased manner by quoting police sources only. The police on its part has not issued any 'denials to these biased reports' and helped on their part to 'communalise the situation' and has not tried to 'diffuse the charged atmosphere. . (For details of investigation , see 'Report on the Communal Flare Up in Vidarbha', *The Milli Gazette*, 16-30 Nov 2007)

Definitely neither the pipe bomb attack in Tenkasi nor the bomb scare incident at Wardha are the only incidents of its kind. One can cite incidents after incidents where the involvement of RSS, Shiv Sena or one of their affiliated organisations can be clearly demonstrated in acts which are considered 'terrorist actions' in today's parlance. It is a different matter that 'Islamic Terrorists' or 'Maoists' seem to be the usual whipping boys for the media or the intelligence people. □□□